

JEFFERSON JOURNAL

March/April 2022



**Rural
Oregonians
Struggle To Get
Medications As
Pharmacies Close**

Something powerful and beautiful is rising from the ashes across our state. Our communal hardship has rekindled in us one of our greatest and most unifying strengths — **kindness**. So elemental, yet so brave. Awakened by an urgent need for connection and compassion. Kindness has inspired us to listen. To learn. To lend a hand. To take care of each other. Now we have the opportunity to keep it lit. Let's not let it smolder. Let's fan the embers in our hearts. Let's keep kindness at the forefront of our lives, and live as open examples of it. Kindness inspires kindness. And here, in our Oregon, that is what makes us —

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FEATURED

6 Rural Oregonians Struggle To Get Medications As Pharmacies Close

By April Ehrlich

During the pandemic, Americans started going to their local pharmacy for more than just prescriptions; they went for masks, COVID tests and vaccines. But even with that increased business, retail pharmacies big and small are closing their doors, a national trend that's been accelerated by the pandemic.

10 Few Obtain Treatment In First Year Of Oregon Drug-Decriminalization Grants

By Emily Green

More than 16,000 Oregonians accessed services through the new grant program set up under Oregon's landmark drug-decriminalization law in its first year, but less than 1% of those helped with Measure 110 dollars were reported to have entered treatment, new state data shows.

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COVER: Rural Oregonians are frustrated with pharmacy closures.

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The Information Divide

All manner of historians, academics and political prognosticators these days are lamenting America's broken democracy. The list of potential causes of our political dysfunction is long and varied – too much money in politics, outdated legacy systems like the electoral college, Gerrymandered redistricting schemes, cryptic rules like the filibuster, voter suppression, activist judges, tribalism, conspiracy theories, the urban-rural divide. There's little doubt that all these factors are playing a role in the way our institutions of self-governance are functioning and the downright cynicism many citizens feel today toward democracy in America.

Contributing to the upheaval, and perhaps the seed from which much of it grows, is the abject failure of our country's mass communication system. In the 1980s, the advent of cable television sparked an era of deregulation of the media sector which created the fragmented, partisan media ecosystem we have today. Add to that the brave new world of social media and the powerful economic incentive social media platforms have to amplify attention-grabbing content, regardless of whether it's true or serves the public interest, and it's no wonder citizens are divided and ill-informed.

The current media environment is also one where access to quality fact-based information is becoming increasingly complex and dependent on socioeconomic status. While the Internet has vastly expanded access to more quality journalism than we imagined just a few decades ago, paywalls and required subscriptions now limit this content to those who can afford it, and are willing and able to register their credit cards to get it. Recently, NPR's Scott Simon wrote about this growing trend:

"I have a strong, even personal interest in paying journalists fairly. But the cost most people have to pay these days if they want to try to stay informed and enrich their minds with a range of opinions is pretty steep.

It's become harder to read more than an article or two in most publications ... News sites, from *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* to *The Des Moines Register*, insist you subscribe. So do *Ebony*, *The New Yorker*, *The Economist*, *Rolling Stone* and opinion journals, including *The Nation* and *National Review*, and sports-reporting sites. And of course, there are proliferating newsletters and extra-access-plus plans, as news

broadcasters begin their own subscription services. They don't crave an audience, so much as what they call a 'customer base.'

'You can't do much web grazing of quality content these days without a paywall clanging shut on you,' Jack Shafer wrote last year in *Politico*. 'What delights publishers about subscriptions is what everybody from Amazon to Spotify to the Dollar Shave Club to Netflix love – the annuity-like reliability of steady revenue.'

But the cost of inducing people to subscribe is to make news, information and a range of opinions available to only those who have the means to afford and receive them online. This skews the audience toward what Nikki Usher, a University of Illinois College of Media associate professor, calls the 'rich, white, and blue,' as in left-leaning.

The political and social divides, which so many decry, may begin between those who can and those who can't afford access to a wide range of fact-checked, accurate information. Disinformation, of course, is utterly free."

As I researched information for this column, I ran across an article titled "Media Leaders Worry About Subscription Wealth Gap" at *Business Insider*. When I clicked on the link I got this message: "This story is available exclusively to Insider subscribers. Become an Insider and start reading now." No kidding!

Here at JPR, we continue to believe that universal access to high-quality journalism and fact-based information is an essential element of a democratic society. Our mix of local, regional, national and international content will always be free and available to everyone, as a fundamental value of our public service mission and thanks to the thousands of citizens who voluntarily support our work so generously, year after year.

The current media environment is also one where access to quality fact-based information is becoming increasingly complex and dependent on socioeconomic status.



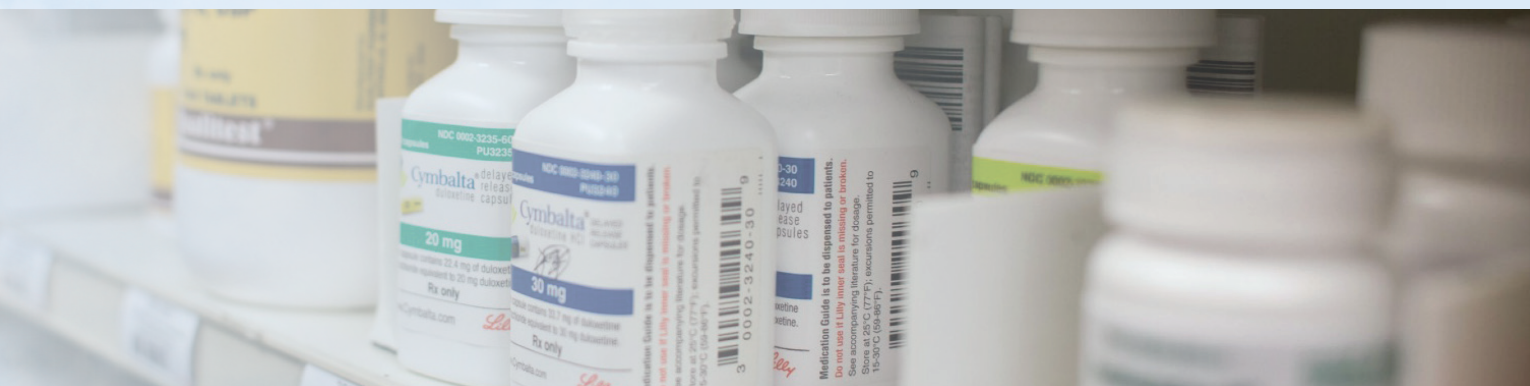
Paul Westhelle is
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Rural Oregonians Struggle To Get Medications As Pharmacies Close

By April Ehrlich





ANDREW NIXON CAPITAL PUBLIC RADIO

Last year, Oregon lost nearly 60 pharmacies at once after the Pacific Northwest retailer Bi-Mart got out of the pharmacy business.

Baker City resident Lisa Raffety has rheumatoid arthritis and needs to get her medications refilled twice a month. Recently, that's meant standing in line at a pharmacy for more than two hours.

"It hurts to stand for any length of time, to be on my feet, because it's a hard cement floor," Raffety said.

Raffety has had to get used to long waits after Bi-Mart closed its pharmacy counter last year, forcing its former patients to transfer about 1,500 prescriptions to the remaining three pharmacies in Baker County, which covers 3,000 square miles. Now lines in those pharmacies are so long, Raffety said people bring their dinners and eat them while waiting. Staff have to provide wheelchairs to people who can't stand that long.

Last year, Oregon lost nearly 60 pharmacies at once after the Pacific Northwest retailer Bi-Mart got out of the pharmacy business. The company's decision left thousands of Oregonians with prescriptions that needed to transfer elsewhere.

Some people went to other nearby pharmacies without much issue. But in rural areas where options were already limited, remaining pharmacies struggled to take on the extra workload.

If Raffety doesn't take her medication every day, she can't walk. She has tried changing her prescriptions to get them by

mail, but complications with her insurance have made that difficult.

"I haven't figured out when the best time to come and stand in line would be," Raffety said. "I don't want to know because I don't want to do this anymore."

During the pandemic, Americans started going to their local pharmacy for more than just prescriptions; they went for masks, COVID tests and vaccines. But even with that increased business, retail pharmacies big and small are closing their doors, a national trend that's been accelerated by the pandemic.

Bi-Mart spokesman Don Leber said several factors went into the decision to close its pharmacies.

"We were really forced to make a decision we never wanted to make," Leber said.

Leber said one factor was Oregon's Corporate Activity Tax, which taxes companies based on their revenues, not their profits. Pharmacies have high revenues, but when they subtract the high costs of drugs and overhead, they end up with low profits.

Then there's another, nationwide issue: increasing fees associated with insurance plans, which have risen substantially recently.

"Over the past probably six-plus years, these fees have risen to millions of dollars annually for us," Leber said. "And now

it's becoming where it's negative dollars against our total [profits] for Bi-Mart to be able to do business. And quite frankly, it got to the point that within the next three to five years that if we continue down this path, which obviously looks like it would, it would affect the ability for Bi-Mart to remain open as an 80-store retailer."

The role of pharmaceutical "middlemen"

Pharmacist Rick Chester says his small independent pharmacy, Medicap Pharmacy in Talent, experienced an influx of new patients after the nearby Bi-Mart closed its pharmacy counter.

"It happened immediately," he said. "Like, overnight."

On top of that, other pharmacies were severely limiting their hours or closing their counters for weeks straight because of pandemic-related staffing shortages and pharmacist burnout. Chester says their patients started showing up at his doors, too.

"Everybody likes growth if they have a business, but if it happens within a month, that's a pretty dramatic shift," Chester said.

Running a pharmacy isn't like a normal business, Chester said. Unpredictability can make it difficult to know which drugs to order, and how much. It's also hard to know what pharmacies will be paid by patients' insurance plans later down the line.

When pharmacies issue medicines through insurance or Medicare plans, they have to work through companies called pharmaceutical benefit managers, or PBMs.

After someone gets their medicine at a pharmacy through an insurance plan, the PBM is supposed to reimburse the pharmacy for the drug cost and some overhead. But in recent years, PBMs started decreasing the amount they reimburse when pharmacies don't meet certain sales markers.

"They claw back money from pharmacies rather than paying them," Chester said. "So for example, they tell me when I process a prescription that they'll pay me \$10, but they might claw back \$3 or \$4. So I end up ultimately with \$6."

PBMs' sales markers, also called quality measures, can be complicated. For instance, a PBM might reimburse a pharmacy with more money if it dispenses a certain drug to diabetes patients. But, if a pharmacy slips up with one patient, it could face decreased reimbursements on all of its patients under that PBM.

"The rules are so vague and so inconsistent, they can kind of decide 'Gee, we really weren't making enough money, so we'll say the pharmacy is inefficient and just throw some more costs on them,'" said Oregon Sen. Ron Wyden.

Wyden has called on Congress to increase its oversight of pharmaceutical benefit managers.

"The entire supply chain, it's broken," he said.

Some states have started regulating them on their own, including Oregon. Since 2019, the state has required PBMs to reimburse pharmacies at least for the price they paid for



Pharmacist and Medicap Pharmacy owner Rick Chester processes prescription orders in Talent, Oregon, in December 2021.

drugs. PBMs are also subject to state audit limits, and they aren't allowed to retroactively take away money from pharmacies through fees — they must reimburse pharmacies for the initial agreed-on price.

But Oregon doesn't require PBMs to reimburse pharmacies for the cost of doing business — like covering pharmacist and staff salaries, the most expensive part of running a pharmacy.

"This is the most fundamental problem, as pharmacies cannot afford to hire enough staff for appropriate care to patients or to meet public demand for services," said Kevin Russell, the Central Oregon director for the Oregon State Pharmacy Association. "If pharmacies push back, PBMs are fine with pharmacies not being in their network or even going out of business."

Many PBMs also own mail-order prescription businesses. By having their customers receive their medications directly through the mail, they save money by not having to work through retail pharmacies. Meanwhile, just three PBM corporations control about 75% of the market — Express Scripts, CVS Health and OptumRx of UnitedHealth Group — which also have business ties to chain retail pharmacies, like CVS.

Russell said it's in PBMs' best interest to have retail pharmacies close, so more customers turn to mailed medication — and they're using their lobbying and market power to make that happen.

"This type of conflict of interest and use of market power to bankrupt competition should be illegal," Russell said. "Yet, they get away with it as federally they fall outside of many laws which apply to consumer businesses or insurers. The government seems to have little will to prosecute them for anti-trust violations."

Oregon's law forbids PBMs from making patients use only mail-order services. Patients in Oregon must have the option to go to their local pharmacy. But if more pharmacies close, then those options are limited.



CREDIT APRIL EHRLICH - OPB

Medicap Pharmacy staff pharmacist Ryan Baker in December 2021 works on prescription orders at this independent pharmacy in Talent, Oregon.

Wyden has called on Congress to increase its oversight of pharmaceutical benefit managers.

Representatives of the top three major PBMs didn't respond to requests for comment. Greg Lopes of the Pharmaceutical Care Management Association — a trade association representing PBMs — said he doesn't believe PBMs are a major contributor to pharmacy closures.

"Independent pharmacies [and] retail pharmacies are essential to our health care system," Lopes said. "PBMs absolutely need pharmacies to exist, and any accusation that PBMs are attempting or trying to put pharmacies out of business is just not based in fact."

By negotiating contracts with pharmacies, Lopes said PBMs help insurers save money, which they can then pass down to patients by lowering monthly premiums. Still, there's no guarantee that insurance companies will actually lower their premiums, nor is that information tracked or published publicly.

The impacts on rural communities

When his email inbox became flooded with complaints about long pharmacy lines, Baker County Commissioner Mark Bennett worked with his colleagues on an unusual solution: Why not hire young people to stand in line for those who can't?

"We were trying to figure out a way we could hire high school students or someone to stand in line, but we couldn't figure out how to deal equitably," Bennett said.

County staff didn't think it would be fair if someone stood in line for, say, two hours to get their medications, only to have

a county-hired teenager get to the counter in front of them with a long list of other people's prescriptions. They ultimately ditched the idea.

"Instead we have been sending county employees over to stand in line for those folks that are in quarantine or otherwise can't be out in public," Bennett said. "It's a big challenge."

Pharmacy options were already tight in this large, rural area before Bi-Mart closed its pharmacy counter last year. Now, residents say the problem is untenable.

"They're not even answering their phones," said resident Millie Larson. "You can't call the pharmacist and ask them a simple question, like, 'Is my refill ready?' You have to [get the] answer by waiting in line for 2-and-a-half hours."

Larson has a flexible work schedule, so she can more easily deal with the wait times when she gets her refills about twice a month. But many of her friends and family can't make it work, so she picks up their medicines for them. As long as they have permission, people are generally allowed to pick up prescriptions for other people.

"They were really excited that I was able to do that for them," Larson said. "I was just like, 'Why not? If I can do it, then might as well help others that can't.'"

She's worried about how much longer this will last. Larson has been waiting in lines for people since November; by February, the wait times were still amounting to more than an hour.

The problem is, things have gotten too complicated, said Doug Hoey, chief executive officer of the National Community Pharmacists Association.

"One thing we can do is, we can make the payment model for pharmacies and for patients more transparent, more straightforward," Hoey said. "Because right now it's just a guessing game for most patients when they go into a pharmacy. And it certainly is for the pharmacy itself what they're going to be paid."

Hoey wants to cut out the middlemen. Instead, patients should pay pharmacies the actual cost of the drug — whether it's \$5 or \$1,000 — then a flat fee on top of that to cover the costs of the pharmacy's overhead. That fee could range between \$10 and \$12.

"That helps [pharmacies] pay for the employees, that gives them some predictability," Hoey said. "So it's transparent for consumers and for the pharmacy."

Hoey said if there isn't any change — either some more regulation of the pharmacy payment market, or an entire overhaul of the system — pharmacies will continue to close, and people in rural areas will likely be hardest hit.

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April Ehrlich began freelancing for Jefferson Public Radio in 2016. She officially joined the team as *Morning Edition* host and a *Jefferson Exchange* producer in August 2017.



Few Obtain Treatment In First Year Of Oregon Drug-Decriminalization Grants

By Emily Green



More than 16,000 Oregonians accessed services through the new grant program set up under Oregon's landmark drug-decriminalization law in its first year, but less than 1% of those helped with Measure 110 dollars were reported to have entered treatment, new state data shows.

Most of those who accessed the grant-funded services last year, nearly 60%, engaged with harm reduction programs such as syringe exchanges and naloxone distribution.

When voters passed Measure 110 in November 2020, they not only decriminalized low-level possession of most illicit drugs such as cocaine, methamphetamine and heroin, they also diverted hundreds of millions in marijuana tax dollars to drug treatment and recovery services. Since the Drug Addiction Treatment and Recovery Act went into effect in February 2021, the money has been distributed through grants, the majority of which the state-appointed Measure 110 Oversight and Accountability Council awards to providers.

Recently, the council began evaluating 281 applications for the next round of funding, about \$270 million to be distributed in the spring.

While the newly released data has limitations, it gives an idea of how the program's initial round of grants – for \$31.4 million in all – is being spent.

What it shows is that while Measure 110 was pitched to voters as a way to expand access to addiction treatment and recovery, the early spending has only led to about 136 people entering treatment – and that's out of hundreds of thousands in Oregon who need but are not receiving treatment for substance use.

Tera Hurst, executive director of the Health Justice Recovery Alliance, said Measure 110 was intended to expand the entire continuum of recovery and harm reduction services to support people in a “longer-term pathway” to recovery.

“I think that the money is going exactly where it needs to be going,” said Hurst, whose organization is focused solely on the implementation of Measure 110. She said harm reduction is the foundation of community support systems for people with substance use disorder, “because you can't help anybody if they're dead.

“So from our perspective, 60% of the people accessing harm reduction services means that we have more people alive today because of these funds, and because of the services that we've invested in,” Hurst said.

Measure's strategies went beyond treatment

The campaign for Measure 110, and the text of the measure itself, stressed increasing access to drug and alcohol treatment

repeatedly. The first page of the measure opens with: “Whereas, Oregonians need adequate access to drug addiction treatment. Oregon ranks nearly last out of the 50 states in access to treatment, and the waiting lists to get treatment are too long. ... Drug treatment and recovery ought to be available to any Oregon resident who requests it.”

The same page ends with: “The People of Oregon, therefore, propose this Drug Addiction Treatment and Recovery Act of 2020 to expand access to drug treatment and recovery services and pay for it with marijuana tax revenue.”

But the text of the voter-approved statute included a lot

What it shows is that while Measure 110 was pitched to voters as a way to expand access to addiction treatment and recovery, the early spending has only led to about 136 people entering treatment — and that's out of hundreds of thousands in Oregon who need but are not receiving treatment for substance use.

more than just treatment funding. The grants set up by the measure are also used to fund peer support and recovery services, housing for people with substance use disorder, harm reduction and incentives to expand the behavioral health workforce.

Asked about the early results, Oregon Health Authority spokesperson Aria Seligmann wrote in an email, “Measure 110 was created to facilitate pathways to recovery and to help empower and support people experiencing substance use concerns in making the choices that are right for their lives. Treatment may be one step on a path to wellness but is by far not the only one.”

The Oversight and Accountability Council which awards the grants is a diverse group composed of people representing behavioral health providers, tribal communities, culturally specific service providers, as well as people in recovery from substance use disorder. Seligmann also said the goal of the council is to meet people where they are at.

“That first step builds trust and can lead to people engaging with other supports and services,” she said. “Formal treatment is not a goal for many people using substances, at least not initially.”

Measure ‘was never designed to promote access to treatment’

Mike Marshall, co-founder and director of Oregon Recovery, said Measure 110 “was never designed to promote access to treatment.” His organization advocates for increasing access to treatment and recovery services across the state. It opposed Measure 110, arguing that the measure was misleading among other issues.

He said because the state pays for treatment as part of a Medicaid match, it can't use marijuana tax dollars to fund treatment because the federal government still considers marijuana illegal.

“They wanted to create decriminalization, and they recognized that they couldn't win decriminalization without linking it to increased services,” he said of New York-based Drug Policy Alliance, which largely funded the Measure 110 campaign.

INSET: A man, 23, sits on the sidewalk in downtown Portland, preparing what he says is heroin, June 25, 2021. Measure 110, a drug treatment and recovery act, aims to connect drug users to treatment and recovery services, including housing assistance instead of serving time in jail for possessing small amounts of drugs.

KRISTYNA WENTZ-GRAFF / OPB

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The Urban Campground, Medford is a partnership between Rogue Retreat and City of Medford, and serves homeless individuals and couples with innovative Pallet Shelters, Rigid Tents, and organized tent sites.



COURTESY OF ROGUE RETREAT

Marshall said Oregon Recovers pushed them to stop leading voters to believe the measure would fund therapeutic treatment.

“It’s so awesome that there’s a whole line of revenue that will be granted to harm reduction and recovery support,” he said, “which are the least funded in a poorly funded system. But too many people personally believe that it’s going to increase access to treatment and it’s going to help reduce the addiction rates – and it’s not designed to do that. That’s an unfair expectation to place on Measure 110.”

Adding to the dynamics of the measure’s funding, the program is intended to fund a particular type of treatment. The text of the law lists “low-barrier substance use disorder treatment” at the top of the list of grant-eligible services. Neither Measure 110 or Senate Bill 755, which filled in many details of the law for implementation, defined what “low-barrier” means. However, it typically means a program that provides fast access to services, is flexible and encourages people to return to care as soon as possible if they have a relapse, rather than ending their treatment.

Of the entities that received grant funds, 31 cited substance use disorder treatment as a service the money would help support. Of the other purposes to be funded, 25 entities listed harm reduction, while 52 listed peer support, 28 listed housing and five listed employment support.

Advocates say the program is designed to focus on services that are not already funded by the Medicaid-funded Oregon Health Plan, which provides free care to low-income people. They say it’s those non-Medicaid eligible services complementing treatment that are really the focus of Measure 110 spending.

“Residential treatment is covered by Medicaid for the most part,” Hurst said. “The funding that Measure 110 is focused on is non-Medicaid funded services. And so the \$302 million that was allocated for this biennium, from our kind of back-of-the-envelope math, is about five times more than Oregon has ever spent on these services. And that’s going to show up in communities like it already has – by keeping people alive, getting



CREDIT BY JAMES HELLMAN, MD

With Measure 110 grant funding, Max’s Mission based in Medford, Ore., distributed 1,516 doses of naloxone.

people housed and getting them the wrap-around services.”

“A major focal point of M110 has always been providing funding for wrap-around services like peer support and recovery housing that aren’t Medicaid eligible in many instances,” Brent Canode, who is the Alano Club of Portland’s executive director and was a vocal Measure 110 supporter, told The Lund Report in an email. He said when those services are provided, they “tend to produce much stronger outcomes” for individuals with a substance use disorder. His nonprofit was awarded a Measure 110 grant of \$32,900 for peer services last year.

Access to treatment needed in Oregon

It turns out the state’s situation was even worse than voters thought when they approved the measure. Oregon is no longer

ranked “nearly last out of 50 states in access to treatment” as the measure and supporting campaign materials emphasized. Last year it slipped to dead last, according to newly released data from the same source of the original talking point, the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

Specifically, 2020 data from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health showed that just over 18.08% of Oregonians need but are not receiving treatment for substance use. The survey also ranked Oregon second in the nation for prevalence of substance use disorder, up from fourth the year before, indicating that 18.22% of the population are affected.

Advocates agree that needs to change.

“There is no doubt that we need a lot more money going into the residential treatment space,” Hurst said but added that the state’s ongoing Medicaid substance use disorder demonstration project, or waiver, should handle some of that demand, improving access to residential treatment, recovery support services and access to transitional housing support services.

The waiver, which went into effect this past April, allows Oregon to receive federal funding for Medicaid services for individuals with a substance use disorder in residential treatment facilities with more than 16 beds.

The Oregon Health Authority is currently exploring options to improve Medicaid reimbursement rates for substance use disorder treatment providers, which would lead to improved access to services.

Grant outcomes still incomplete

Last year, the \$31.4 million in Measure 110 grants were awarded across 67 organizations, including 11 tribes and tribal organizations through a tribal set-aside of \$3 million, and \$6.8 million that was awarded in amended existing Oregon Health Authority contracts by the agency. Portland’s tri-county area received the bulk of the grants.

According to preliminary data from Oregon Health Authority, these grants paid for:

The grant recipients have not yet spent all the money. The funds were distributed in May and June 2021, and grantees were required to spend most of those funds by the end of the year. However, the deadline was extended to June of 2022 when many hadn’t achieved that goal.

At least one grantee, that received a grant for just under \$34,000, shuttered. Achieving Change Together NW, a Portland nonprofit serving youths with co-occurring substance use and mental health disorders, closed its doors in August citing staffing shortages, and the pandemic and accompanying rising adolescent hospitalizations in Oregon as the reason.

When the health authority presented the Measure 110 Oversight and Accountability Council with an aggregated overview of the grantees’ progress on Jan. 5, its Measure 110 Health Strategist Onelia Hawa explained that the data had limitations, citing the failure of some grant winners to submit progress reports, due to staffing and capacity issues, and non-uniform data reporting as reasons.

“We’re not seeing a complete, 100% accurate picture of how Access to Care funding might have increased access and low barrier service,” she told the council.

Amy Ashton-Williams, executive director at Oregon Washington Health Network, told The Lund Report that her organization used the \$354,968 Access to Care grant it was awarded last year to open three drop-in peer centers, located in Hermiston, Pendleton and Milton-Freewater. At these centers, people can get assistance with food stamps or other social services, use a computer or simply get something to eat, watch TV and charge their phone. More than 2,500 people used the peer services between September and December, she said. Oregon Washington Health Network also helped 140 people access permanent or temporary housing.

Ashton-Williams said her organization doesn’t track the number of people who accessed drug and alcohol treatment through the peer services, though most people who utilize the drop-in centers are not in recovery.

Other outcomes funded through Measure 110 grants, according to health authority data, include:

- ◆ Max’s Mission, awarded \$215,408, distributed 1,516 doses of naloxone, 454 Fentanyl test strips and collected more than 8,400 used syringes across Jackson, Josephine and Klamath counties. The nonprofit reported it reversed 111 drug overdoses.
- ◆ Portland’s Oregon Change Clinic, awarded \$228,613 for substance use disorder treatment, harm reduction and housing, reported serving 28 people in its temporary housing program.
- ◆ New Directions Northwest, awarded \$353,415 for substance use disorder treatment and peer services, increased progress on partnerships to provide peer services to local hospitals, primary care offices, law enforcement and jails in Baker, Union and Wallowa counties.
- ◆ OnTrack Rogue Valley, providing substance use disorder treatment focused on the Latinx communities in Jackson and Josephine counties, reported its encounters rose 208% in 2021 over the previous year, with people who speak Spanish attending linguistically specific services at a higher rate.
- ◆ Rogue Retreat, awarded \$166,675, served a combined 1,317 individuals at its Urban Campground and Kelly Shelter in Medford, with 18 of those people exiting to detox or a substance use disorder treatment facility.

The Lund Report is closely tracking the implementation of Measure 110 and its impacts on the behavioral health care system in Oregon as part of a reporting fellowship sponsored by the Association of Health Care Journalists and supported by The Commonwealth Fund. If you have a tip or comment that you think would be helpful, please contact Emily Green at emily@thelundreport.org or enter your tip into this form.

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According to the Oregon State Medical Examiner's Office, 96 people died from heat-related illness over five days of the heat wave last June.

Lawmakers Consider Heat Relief Bills To Protect Vulnerable Oregonians

Bills would provide millions in funding for cooling systems and weather shelters to provide relief during extreme weather events.

Oregon lawmakers are considering two bills aimed at helping vulnerable Oregonians during extreme heat events. The bills were created in response to last June's unprecedented heat wave when nearly 100 people died from heat-related illnesses.

In the first week of this year's short legislative session, lawmakers held public hearings on House Bill 4058, aimed at providing emergency heat relief services to low-income households and communities for color, and Senate Bill 1536, which allows renters to install air conditioning units in their homes. The bills have bipartisan support and are led by a coalition of environmental, climate, health and justice groups.

The first of two bills would direct \$5 million to the Oregon Health Authority to create an emergency distribution program that would deliver air conditioners and air filters to homes in need.

The bill would also allocate \$10 million to the Oregon Department of Energy to create an incentive program to make it easier for vulnerable households to purchase energy-efficient heat pump cooling systems. The program would prioritize people with low-income, communities of color, rural and coastal communities, as well as those who use wood, oil and propane to heat their homes.

During a public hearing before the House Environment and Natural Resources Committee, Oriana Magnera, a manager with the environmental justice nonprofit Verde, said the state needs to act now to prevent more heat-related deaths like the ones that happened during last year's heat dome.

"Most people who passed away had no access to lifesaving cooling devices such as air conditioning or heating and cooling pumps in their homes," she said.

According to the Oregon State Medical Examiner's Office, 96 people died from heat-related illness over five days of the heat wave last June, and 69 of those deaths occurred in Multnomah County. Of those deaths, many were older adults who were found alone in their homes, and all but eight of the deaths were in homes that did not have air-conditioned units.

"The effects of the heat wave were deeply inequitable and most harmed the people least able to seek or afford relief," Magnera said.

HB 4058 will also direct the Oregon Public Utility Commission to find ways of alleviating spikes in energy bills during extreme weather events.



KRISTYNA WENTZ-GRAFF / OPB

Hundreds have sought shelter at a cooling center at the Oregon Convention Center in Portland, June 28, 2021. The cooling center provided water, snacks, meals, blankets, and cots or mats for sleeping.

Magnera said many families avoid turning on their air conditioning units or running their heaters during moments of need because they're afraid of it will increase their energy bills. She said families are having to choose between their health or fear of having their electricity disconnected for not having enough funds to pay their bills.

The second bill, Senate Bill 1536, would remove barriers for renters to install portable air conditioning units in their apartments and would require cooling systems in newly constructed rental units. The bill would also allocate \$2 million to the Oregon Department of Human Services to create extreme weather relief centers such as cooling centers, warming centers and clean air shelters.

Oregon Environmental Council Climate Program Director Nora Apter, whose group supports both bills, said in a written statement that providing Oregonians access to energy-efficient electric heat pumps would not only help the community but also would help with the fight against climate change.

"They are effective at both heating and cooling homes, use less energy than traditional systems and cost less to run than lower efficiency alternatives," she said. "They do not emit toxic air pollutants, and they produce less climate pollution than other heating and cooling appliances on the market."



Monica Samayoa is an award-winning journalist with OPB's Science & Environment unit.

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ANNA KING

Climate induced floods and fires in the Northwest are dramatically pushing animals around on the landscape.

Gangs Of Elk Are Feasting On Farmers' Haystacks Across The Northwest

Gangs of wild elk are attacking farmers' haystacks in Washington and Oregon. They're hungry, after a long drought and record mountain snow this winter has driven animals down to the lowlands. Climate scientists say things may only get worse in the future.

Anthony Leggett's farm is nestled in the foothills outside Anthony Lakes in eastern Oregon.

He grows pasture grass and beardless barley and puts up big stacks of hay to earn extra money for his young family. Leggett's farm costs include equipment, chemicals, fencing and fertilizers. But hay *makes* money.

"Your hay is your paycheck," Leggett says. "That's how you pay your bills, that's how you support your family. And they just take it. You know, they're animals – that's what they do."

He says it's a frustrating situation and he does his best to safely haze the animals.

"[But] you know, if I chase them off my property, they just go to the neighbor's property and get into their haystack," Leggett says.

Across the West, widespread drought has left elk, deer and even wild turkeys hungry and in poor condition – even a bit desperate.

Wild elk are even attacking farmers' haystacks in Washington and Oregon. Record snow across much of the Northwest's mountains has driven animals down to the lowlands – in gangs. And climate scientists say things may only get worse in the future.

Hay, prices are up

Joey McCanna spends a lot of his winter teaching hay growers and ranchers how to build elk-proof electric fencing.

"The other big thing we have going on, that we have staff kind of running frantic on, is we have a lot of elk damage," McCanna said on a recent wildlife management Zoom. "Elk getting into hay stacks is one of the big ones."

McCanna is an expert on resolving wildlife conflicts with humans for the state Department of Fish and Wildlife. He teaches farmers how to set up automatic propane cannons to haze them with noise. But elk are smart – and sometimes it doesn't always work.

This year, drought has upped the stakes – hay prices are up across the West.

"This summer was very hot and dry. And alfalfa and grass hay is at a premium right now," McCanna says.



CREDIT-PETER NILSSON

Elk can undercut a haystack by eating at their neck height, destabilizing the bales. Many commercial bales can weigh more than one ton each. Sometimes those destabilized bales can fall on the animals and kill them.

Floods and fires

Meade Krosby is a senior scientist at the University of Washington's Climate Impacts Group in Seattle.

"So, one of the primary ways that wildlife respond to changing climate is by moving," Krosby says. "They shift their ranges – they want to track the change in climate as it happens."

She says now more than ever before, animals will need to move quickly. Climate induced floods and fires in the Northwest are dramatically pushing animals around on the landscape. She says wildlife will need safe corridors to run for it.

"They have to move so fast, but they have all this stuff in the way," Krosby says. "They have roads and highways in the way, they have cities in the way, agricultural areas. And all of these form these barriers to wildlife getting to where they need to go to shift their ranges to adapt to climate change."

Starving with a belly full of hay

Making things worse, elk can starve on hay.

Elk have four chambered guts that change their bacteria with the season and what's available to eat. In the spring and summer, bacteria colonies adjust to digest green shoots and high-protein feed. But, in the fall and winter gut bacteria are essentially programmed to eat big quantities of dried twigs and grasses with a lower energy.

"The bug is *clostridium perfringens*," Colin Gillin explains. He's the state vet for Oregon's Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Continued on page 23



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BRADLEY W. PARKS

The bill before the Legislature would sever the tie between the forest and the Common School Fund.

Legislative Session May Finally Yield A Solution For Oregon's Elliott State Forest

A bill before the Oregon Legislature would set in motion a plan to create a research forest on the land, preserve the oldest trees and protect vulnerable species while allowing some logging.

The years long saga over the fate of Oregon's Elliott State Forest may soon come to a close.

During this year's short legislative session, Oregon state lawmakers are considering a bill to convert the 91,000-acre forest in Douglas and Coos counties into a "living laboratory" to study forest management, habitat conservation, carbon sequestration and more. The plan also allows some logging.

It's the product of years of negotiations by a wide variety of stakeholders including conservation groups, timber operators, Native American tribes and Oregon State University. The bill appears to have unanimous support from the State Land Board, which is made up of Gov. Kate Brown, Treasurer Tobias Read and Secretary of State Shemia Fagan.

"It shows that Oregonians can come together, they can work around a common vision, they can disagree passionately about details, but they can still figure out a way to compromise and reach an outcome that represents a real win for Oregon," Read said at a recent hearing on the bill before the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Wildfire Recovery.

The bill before lawmakers now is the latest iteration of an idea first pitched more than three years ago to create the Elliott State Research Forest.

It establishes a public entity similar to Oregon Health & Science University or the Oregon State Fair to own and administer

the forest. Such entities have some of the flexibility of private companies while still adhering to public accountability measures such as state public records laws.

Oregon State University would manage the forest and lead the research operation.

"A world-class research forest like the Elliott will be another asset in how we adapt to this rapidly changing environment," Fagan told lawmakers.

The plan for the Elliott would protect most of the oldest forest – about 93% – which is critical for species such as the northern spotted owl and marbled murrelet. Safeguards for coho salmon will also be baked into the plan.

The plan for the Elliott State Forest includes protection of habitat essential for the marbled murrelet.

Portland Audubon conservation director Bob Sallinger said that currently about half of the trees in the Elliott State Forest are around 65 years old. If the research forest plan goes forward, about 70% of the trees will be closer to 100 years old.

"Those are really strong conservation wins," said Sallinger, who serves on the advisory committee that helped craft the plan. "And they've been an incredibly long time coming."

The plan allows selective timber harvest on the Elliott, as well as some clear-cutting and cutting of older trees.

"This process hasn't been easy. It hasn't always been fun," Paul Beck with Douglas Timber Operators told the Senate committee. "We were all passionate, but, thankfully, through the process we were all open, honest and frank."

Continued on page 28

Fog settles on the Elliott State Forest near Coos Bay, Ore., in this 2016 file photo.



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The Internet has arguably morphed into the most extensive and pervasive mind-control system ever created.

Hijacked: How We're Losing Our Minds To The Internet

Your mind has been hijacked by the Internet. If you just scoffed at that then I regret to inform you that the Matrix already has you and not even Morpheus himself will be able to red-pill you back to reality.

Okay, perhaps that's a bit dramatic, but the Internet has arguably morphed into the most extensive and pervasive mind-control system ever created. And while this was not the intention of those who invented the various components that make up the Internet, large systems have a way of evolving and shaping the world in ways not originally intended. Systems take on a life of their own. They grow and change. They push the world this way or that.

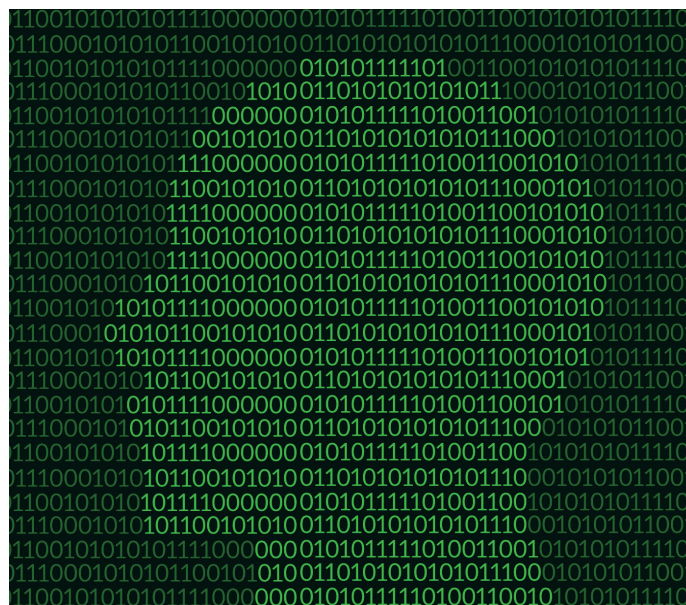
For example, capitalism is an economic system that has resulted in the terraforming of our entire planet. We've strip-mined the earth for gold and other precious metals. We've bored deep below its surface to extract oil and natural gas. We've harvested 2 billion hectares of trees and built sprawling cities with towering skyscrapers. We've entwined the globe in millions of miles of fiber optic cable and littered the heavens with thousands of satellites.

And soon, we will begin capturing and mining asteroids for precious metals and water as we push outward to terraform Mars and beyond. As a species, we will not stop unless something—an extinction-sized asteroid, a deadly pandemic, nuclear Armageddon, alien invasion—stops us.

The Internet is a massive global communications system. It moves vast amounts of data that is collected and analyzed by both humans and Artificial Intelligence (AI) systems to be structured into information. That information can take several different forms. It can be true and useful for making decisions. Or it could be misinformation: false information that is spread without the intent to mislead. Or it could be disinformation: false information that is deliberately misleading.

For many, the COVID-19 pandemic has been an exercise in the difficulty of differentiating information from misinformation and disinformation. Consider the following statements (and not in any particular order): The mRNA vaccines are effective. The mRNA vaccines are not effective. The mRNA vaccines contain a microchip that the government can use to track citizens.

Whether you classify those various statements as either information, misinformation, or disinformation, the Internet has been an integral component of your decision-making process. It has shaped what you think is true and what you think is false. And while that may seem quite obvious to those of us who haven't been living in a cave for the past decade, what isn't so



obvious is the growing number of imperceptible ways in which the Internet is shaping our worldviews.

Humming away in the background of the search engines, social media platforms, and media websites we use to search for and consume information in all its forms are a plethora of machine learning algorithms that are determining what content will be presented, what order it will be presented in, or whether or not it will be presented at all.

Search algorithms can sway public opinion by ranking search results that favor one position on a controversial topic over another. In the case of social media, our online experience is custom-tailored to maximize engagement through dopamine-driven feedback loops. Throw AI-generated pictures, video, and audio that appear real but are “deepfakes” into the mix and we can no longer trust our senses to discern truth from fiction.

All of this raises the following question: How shall we then live?

When it comes to the Internet and the vast amount of information it provides us, here are some simple rules I try my best to follow:

- 1. Trust no one.** This isn't very practical because we need to trust other people in order to survive, but when it comes to information on the Internet, trusting no one is a better default position than trusting everyone.

Continued on page 23

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Inside The Box

Continued from page 21

- 2. Trust someone.** But when we do trust someone (an anonymous person, a celebrity, a known expert, a media outlet, a government agency), we should do so with a healthy dose of skepticism.
- 3. Trust but verify.** Do not rely on a single source for information, even if that source has a good track record.
- 4. Anonymity erodes credibility.** If a news report relies on an anonymous source (“an official close to the matter”), that’s a major hit to credibility. Proceed with caution.
- 5. Have a better memory than a goldfish.** The better we can remember what information was presented in the past, the better we’re able to evaluate new information within that historical context. For example, I remember in the early days of the pandemic when the CDC recommended that Americans NOT wear masks. Remembering that fact provides context that helps me better evaluate future mask recommendations from the CDC.
- 6. Follow the money.** Who are the stakeholders that have the most to gain or lose from the information being presented? For example, the pharmaceutical companies manufacturing and selling mRNA vaccines have the most to gain

or lose from emerging information regarding the effectiveness of their vaccines. This rule applies to government agencies and politicians as well. If they’ve invested a lot of our tax dollars and/or personal political capital into a particular policy then it’s unlikely that they’ll admit when that policy didn’t go as planned or was a total failure.

I used to think that a brain-computer interface that connected us directly to AI systems would be the gateway to mass mind-control. But as I look at the current state of the Internet with its pervasiveness and consolidation of power into just a handful of big tech companies that control the algorithms that increasingly control us, I’m beginning to wonder if a merger with a superintelligence is exactly what we’ll need in the future to set our hijacked minds free.



Scott Dewing is a technologist, writer, and educator. He lives in the State of Jefferson.

JPR News Focus: Environment

Continued from page 17

“It’s a bacteria that all ruminants carry in their guts, it’s just you don’t want that clostridium to get out of control,” Gillin says. “And it’s when you throw corn in there, it starts to have a party.”

In this case, the corn is hay.

The bacteria break down the walls of the stomach and intestines, so an elk can starve to death with a belly full of alfalfa.

‘Elk curtains’

At the Northwest Hay Expo in Kennewick, Washington mostly men, mostly unmasked, roam around the great hall, slapping hands and checking out the latest in twine, balers and tarping technology. Pamphlets, ball caps and squishy stress-balls shaped like little tractors litter vendor’s tables.

A vendor motions to a passing farmer, “Hi, ya, how you? Enjoying your day so far?”

Clint Vieu is from Walla Walla. He’s with a major tarping services company called ITC Services out of Moses Lake. He says one solution for growers is to install “elk curtains” which are tarps covering the sides of big stacks. Left unprotected Vieu says, “Stacks have fallen on elk ‘cause they’ll eat into it so much that it will actually destabilize the stack and it will collapse and fall in on the animals.”

‘It’s life’

Every year, elk bust up Anthony Leggett’s fences to get to his hay and crops. And every year, he fixes them again.

“You know if I chase them off my property, they just go to the neighbor’s property and get into their haystack,” Leggett says.

Still, Leggett has made his peace with the elk.



CREDIT-PETER NILSSON

Elk gather at Peter Nilsson’s farm outside of La Grande, Oregon. He says he loves watching the bald eagles and moose that show up on his farm by the river. And he thinks elk are cool too. But not when an entire herd parties all winter at his spread, eating his hay.

“We just happen to live in a spot where there’s a trail that they come down on,” he says. “For us, it’s life.”

Anna King calls Richland, Washington home and loves unearthing great stories about people in the Northwest. She reports for the Northwest News Network from a studio at Washington State University, Tri-Cities. She covers the Mid-Columbia region, from nuclear reactors to Mexican rodeos.



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10:00am Metropolitan Opera
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3:00pm The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center

4:00pm All Things Considered
5:00pm New York Philharmonic
7:00pm State Farm Music Hall

Sunday

5:00am Weekend Edition
9:00am Millennium of Music
10:00am Sunday Baroque
12:00pm Siskiyou Music Hall
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3:00am World Café

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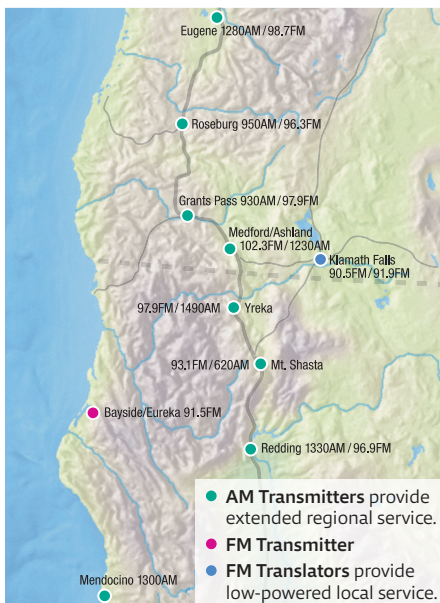
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9:00am Wait Wait... Don't Tell Me!
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11:00am Snap Judgement
12:00pm E-Town
1:00pm Mountain Stage
3:00pm Folk Alley
5:00pm All Things Considered
6:00pm American Rhythm

8:00pm Conversations from the World Cafe
9:00pm The Retro Lounge
10:00pm Late Night Blues
12:00am Undercurrents

Sunday

5:00am Weekend Edition
9:00am TED Radio Hour
10:00am This American Life
11:00am The Moth Radio Hour
12:00pm Jazz Sunday
2:00pm American Routes
4:00pm Sound Opinions
5:00pm All Things Considered
6:00pm The Folk Show
9:00pm Woodsongs
10:00pm The Midnight Special
12:00pm Mountain Stage
1:00am Undercurrents

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4:00pm PRI's The World
5:00pm On Point
6:00pm 1A
7:00pm Fresh Air (repeat)
8:00pm The Jefferson Exchange (repeat of 8am broadcast)
10:00pm BBC World Service

Saturday

5:00am BBC World Service
7:00am Inside Europe
8:00am Day 6

9:00am Freakonomics Radio
10:00am Planet Money
11:00am Hidden Brain
12:00pm Living on Earth
1:00pm Science Friday
3:00pm To the Best of Our Knowledge
5:00pm Politics with Amy Walter
6:00pm Selected Shorts
7:00pm BBC World Service

Sunday

5:00am BBC World Service
8:00am On The Media
9:00am Innovation Hub
10:00am Reveal
11:00am This American Life
12:00pm TED Radio Hour
1:00pm The New Yorker Radio Hour
2:00pm Fresh Air Weekend
3:00pm Milk Street Radio
4:00pm Travel with Rick Steves
5:00pm To the Best of Our Knowledge
7:00pm BBC World Service

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ERIK NEUMANN

Approximately 2,500 manufactured homes or RVs were destroyed in 18 parks during the Almeda Fire.

Oregon Bill Would Expand Development Of Manufactured Homes To Benefit Wildfire Survivors

A bill moving through the Oregon legislature could expand locations where prefabricated and manufactured homes can be sited in the state.

Among its provisions, the legislation would prevent cities and counties from imposing optional standards that create obstacles to these homes being built, like the pitch of a roof angle, minimum building size, the presence of a carport or garage, house color or appearance.

"We are stipulating that manufactured homes should simply be held to the same standards that you would apply to any other kind of construction on the ground," says Rep. Pam Marsh, D-Ashland, the bill's sponsor.

It would also directly benefit wildfire survivors in Marsh's district, where manufactured home parks were among the hardest hit communities by 2020's devastating Almeda Fire. The bill would allow wildfire survivors to use the state's manufactured home loan program to pay for prefabricated structures and would allow prefab homes to be built within communities explicitly defined as manufactured home parks.

Approximately 2,500 manufactured homes or RVs were destroyed in 18 parks during the Almeda Fire, according to Marsh. Prior to the fire, her Southern Oregon district had more manufactured homes than any other district in the state.

Like many communities in Oregon, the Rogue Valley is in the midst of a housing crisis and manufactured homes served as de facto affordable housing, often for the elderly, Latino families, and low-income residents.

"What we've seen as a result of Almeda is the devastation of just wiping out a significant portion of that sector because the people who are most hurt there are our most vulnerable residents," Marsh says.

The bill is being endorsed by CASA of Oregon, an organization focused on farmworkers and affordable housing development, because it would explicitly allow for more housing types to be added to manufactured home parks.

"Now the Almeda Fire has become the catalyst for expediting that change and getting it done, so that we have more options on the table," says Rose Ojeda, a senior project manager with CASA of Oregon.

While the proposal has received broad support by legislative House members and a coalition of groups like Oregon AARP, the Housing Alliance and the League of Oregon Cities, it has not been supported unanimously.



CREDIT APRIL EHRUCH

The Almeda fire left a wide path of destruction in Southern Oregon as seen in this 2020 file photo of the remains of Medford Estates, a manufactured home park. A bill making its way through the Legislature could provide survivors some relief by allowing them to tap into a loan program to build new homes. It also could expand locations where prefabricated and manufactured homes can be sited in the state.

Rep. Lily Morgan, R-Grants Pass, is among a contingent of Republican lawmakers who opposed the bill. Morgan says past legislative sessions during the pandemic resulted in dramatic changes to the state's housing laws. She says lawmakers should wait to see the impact of that legislation before enacting new laws.

"It is a matter of the timing in the short session and just allowing the impact of what we passed in the special session and the long session to take place to see the next phases," Morgan says. Instead, she says lawmakers should take up the issue in 2023.

HB 4064 was passed by the House of Representatives in mid-February. Its awaiting review by the state Senate.



JPR's Erik Neumann is JPR's interim news director. He earned a master's degree from the UC Berkeley Graduate School of Journalism and joined JPR as a reporter in 2019 after working at NPR member station KUER in Salt Lake City. Erik grew up alongside the Puget Sound and is passionate about the power of narrative storytelling to explore the issues that impact people's lives.

JPR News Focus: Environment

Continued from page 19

Oregon established the Elliott State Forest in 1930 and linked it to the Common School Fund. Money generated from logging the forest helped fund public education.

However, as logging restrictions tightened in Oregon, especially around sensitive habitat for owls and murrelets, the Elliott could no longer generate enough money to pay what it owed public schools. Since 2018, the Elliott State Forest has generated no revenue for the Common School Fund and actually drained more than a million dollars per year from the fund in management expenses.

The bill before the Legislature would sever the tie between the forest and the Common School Fund. That would eliminate the Elliott's ongoing financial obligation to schools but would also require the state to compensate the fund for the full value of the forest, which is about \$221 million, according to the most recent appraisal. The state has about \$121 million left to pay, according to the Department of State Lands.

Rep. David Brock Smith, R-Port Orford, said he's "all in" in support of the bill, but wants to make sure the forest in his district can pay for itself through timber harvesting before the Land Board votes to decouple it from the Common School Fund.

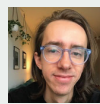
"I just want to make sure that all those boxes are checked before we do the end and final piece of the decoupling," Brock Smith said.

Paying off the forest's obligation to the Common School Fund will require a separate funding request from the governor. The Elliott advisory committee is also in the process of developing and seeking approval for a habitat conservation plan with federal regulators, and writing a forest management plan.

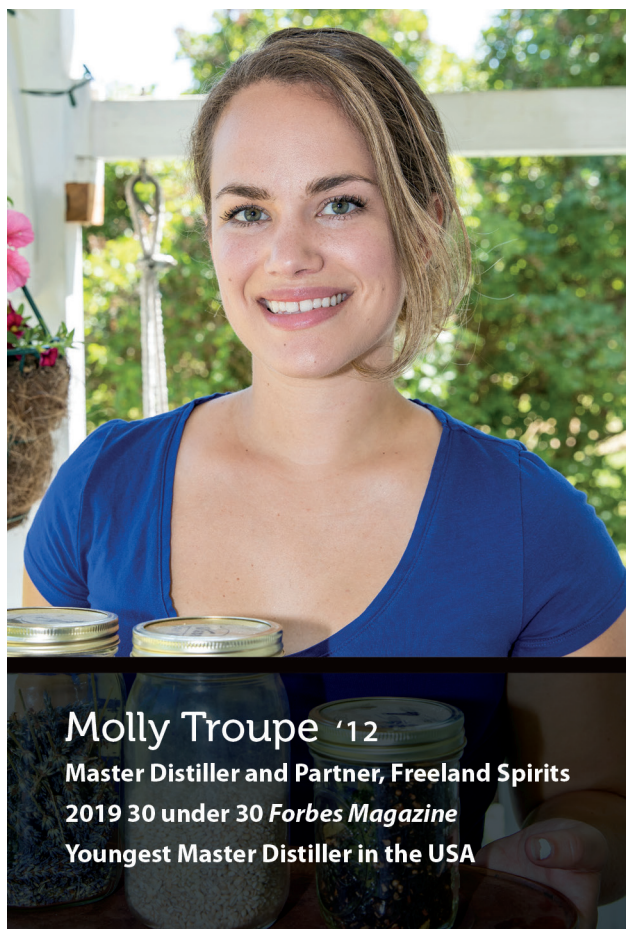
"We would not be supporting [the bill] if we had any questions about the viability of what we're talking about at this point and that all of these pieces would be secured before it actually does advance," Sallinger said.

If passed and signed by the governor, the law would take effect 91 days after the end of the legislative session.

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Bradley Parks is a reporter and photojournalist covering science and environment from Oregon Public Broadcasting's Bend bureau.



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BRADLEY W. PARKS

A supervolcano, a massive eruption and a lost lake left Oregon with what could be the largest known lithium deposit in the United States.

How Oregon Landed A Lithium Bounty

Sammy Castonguay broke a chunk of rock off a small outcropping on the northeast rim of the McDermitt Caldera on the Oregon-Nevada border and pinned it to the ground with his boot. He raised his hammer and, with a gentle swing, smashed the rock into smaller pieces.

Castonguay was collecting samples for his geology students at Treasure Valley Community College in Ontario, Oregon, on a sunny Friday in January. He said teaching about this ancient supervolcano is a lot easier when he can hand a piece of the soft, white rock to his pupils.

“Last time I was out here, I think I only gathered like five samples,” Castonguay said, admiring a specimen striped with burnt orange. “And those walked away really quickly.”

Others are looking for their piece of the McDermitt Caldera too.

The caldera has some of the highest concentrations of lithium in the United States. Lithium is the lightest metal on earth and highly reactive, making it an ideal ingredient in batteries to power cellphones, laptops and electric vehicles.

The British Columbia-based company Lithium Americas is moving forward with a mining project on the southern tip of the caldera in Nevada that has drawn lawsuits and protests.

Meanwhile, Australia-based Jindalee Resources is exploring a lithium deposit on the Oregon side of the caldera that it says could be the biggest in the country. No mine has been proposed in Oregon, but after scoping the Bureau of Land Management site, Jindalee says the deposit could eventually support one.

The “lithium rush” is coming to the Beaver State as the U.S. and global powers seek more of the metal to power electric vehicles and store renewable energy from wind and solar. Digging up Oregon’s lithium would mean sacrificing this chunk of the sagebrush sea to provide the nation with a key ingredient to wean itself off fossil fuels.

Castonguay says it’s important to know the history of the McDermitt Caldera and how it formed before deciding whether to alter this landscape forever.

“This feature we’re talking about and waving our arms around is 16 million years old,” Castonguay said, gesturing to the vast caldera before him. “And we’re about to make decisions in five, 10 years about this thing. That’s a blink of an eye in geologic time.”

An eruption to dwarf St. Helens

Castonguay scribbled field notes as the sun melted the thin layer of snow cover and turned the ground to soup. He said this was not the place to be 16.4 million years ago.

“We would not want to be standing here,” Castonguay said. “This is the site of an immense eruption.”

The same hotspot that causes volcanic activity at Yellowstone National Park today was heating up McDermitt at the



ABOVE: Disaster Peak, left, punctuates the northwest rim of the McDermitt Caldera in southeast Oregon, Jan. 14, 2022. The historic lakebed in the foreground contains some of the highest concentrations of lithium in the United States.



LEFT: Sammy Castonguay nibbles a rock to measure its grain size.

time. Contrary to other volcanoes, which are created by colliding or diverging tectonic plates, hotspots are relatively stationary and are the result of hot material near the center of the earth rising to the surface.

The hotspot warmed a magma chamber, creating pressure that caused the volcano to erupt.

Chris Henry, a research geologist emeritus at the University of Nevada-Reno and the Nevada Bureau of Mines and Geology who helped make the first geologic map of the McDermitt Caldera, said the eruption was unlike anything anyone alive today has ever seen.

“What happens in this is the magma’s bubbling up, and it shoots up in a big column,” Henry said. “That column collapses, and it flows out as very hot, fairly dense, gas-rich, magma particle-rich flows. They’re very hot. They cook everything.”

The McDermitt eruption ejected about 1,000 times more magma than Mount St. Helens in 1980, blazing a trail of destruction.

“Any wildlife, any vegetation in the immediate area would really be destroyed, sadly,” Henry said. “Mount St. Helens killed a bunch of people, knocked down a lot of forest; this was a much bigger eruption, and it would have done even more so.”

Lost lake

The hollowed-out magma chamber was no longer strong enough to hold the land above, so the center of the volcano collapsed into the void, creating a lakebed surrounded by mountains and buttes.

CREDIT: BRADLEY W. PARKS/OPB

Down To Earth

Continued from page 29

Today, the McDermitt Caldera blends into the tan satellite view of the arid American West. But up until at least 15.7 million years ago, Henry said, the caldera was filled with water like Crater Lake and Newberry Crater to the west.

Over time, the lake that filled McDermitt Caldera slowly eroded the rhyolite rim that held the water in place. That erosive process is what moved a lot of the lithium stored in the rim of the caldera into the lakebed clays, but Henry said an additional source of lithium is likely.

The unique geology of the McDermitt Caldera, coupled with a fortuitous drawing of state lines, has positioned Oregon and its poorest county, Malheur, to play a major role in the global transition to renewable energy.

"I think that Oregonians need to know about this specific geology and this specific mineral that's here in lithium because it plays such an immense role in the future of climate change," Castonguay said.

Smaller eruptions continued in and around the McDermitt Caldera for a few hundred thousand years after the initial blast 16.4 million years ago. Volcanic activity died down at McDermitt as the North American tectonic plate slowly moved over the hotspot (imagine a sheet of cookies baking over a Bunsen burner), leaving a trail of volcanic centers from here to Yellowstone.

None of them seems to have the type of lithium deposits found at McDermitt. Scientists aren't sure why.

"And that's real curious because it would seem like the same geology and the same geologic processes occurred in these other places, so why don't they have lithium?" Henry said. "And that's a real big question and one we're puzzling over."

Oregon's opportunity

The American appetite for lithium is more voracious than it's ever been.

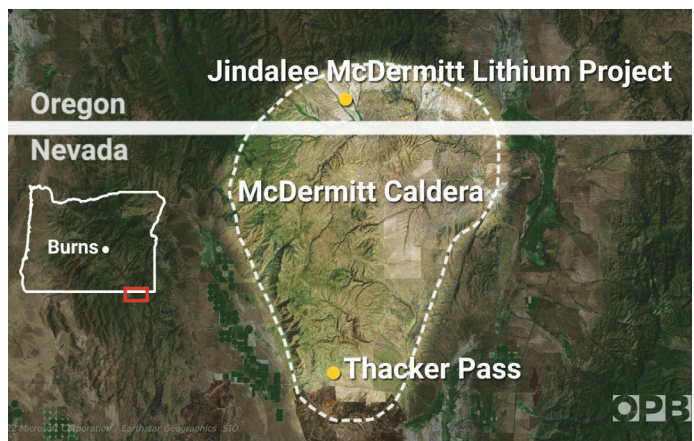
Most people have a lithium-ion battery in their pocket and many of them replace it every few years. Carmakers like General Motors have made promises to go at least partially if not fully electric within the next few years.

"These are things that directly affect people's lives," Henry said. "If we want to have electric vehicles and a lot of other electrical applications, we're gonna need to have the materials that go into those batteries, and currently lithium is the really big thing."

While U.S. lithium consumption has spiked, production hasn't.

The only lithium produced in the United States last year came from a brine extraction facility near Silver Peak, Nevada – a project that's been online since the 1960s. The U.S. imports the majority of its lithium products from Argentina, Chile, China and Russia.

The Trump administration labeled lithium a critical mineral in 2018, expediting the approval process for lithium mining and exploration. The Biden administration has since announced its intent to source, refine and recycle more lithium domestically.



CREDIT: MACGREGOR CAMPBELL - OPB

A map of the McDermitt Caldera on the Oregon-Nevada border.

Some are excited by the prospect of lithium extraction in Oregon. Greg Smith, who directs Malheur County's economic development agency, says a mine could provide well-paying jobs and spur growth in other sectors like housing and hospitality. Malheur County has the highest poverty rate in the state, according to a 2020 report from the Oregon Center for Public Policy.

Smith said he's also aware of the controversy created by a proposed lithium mine on the Nevada side of the McDermitt Caldera at Thacker Pass. That project has attracted multiple lawsuits, including from the nearby Fort McDermitt Paiute and Shoshone and Burns Paiute tribes.

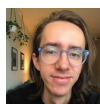
"For us to be able to create this economic opportunity, we're gonna have to do it the Oregon way," Smith said. "And we're gonna have to make sure that it's done in a manner that benefits all parties."

Mineral exploration and geologic study have proven the state has a lot of lithium. It's unclear whether Oregonians will support digging it all up.

You can still see the remnants from the last time Oregon mined the McDermitt Caldera. Castonguay pointed to cinnamon- and ginger-colored piles of waste left over from uranium and mercury extraction years ago.

"It is a gift to have the conversation about this metal," Castonguay said of lithium. "And to make short-lived, quick decisions, we are so far beyond that. We've paid that price before."

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Bradley W. Park is a reporter and photojournalist covering science and environment from OPB's Bend bureau.



GEOFF RIDDEN

“Theatre may encounter bumps and bruises but storytelling and gathering is needed to feed our souls — and that will never end.”

—Valerie Rachelle, Oregon Cabaret Theatre
Artistic Director

“The very pink of courtesy” (*Romeo and Juliet*)

Regular readers (and I hope you are a regular reader!) will know that I try to have a Shakespeare quotation at the head of each of my articles, one which I hope ties in to its content. This time I wanted to write about the Oregon Cabaret Theatre (OCT), but I struggled to find an appropriate quotation—strange as it may seem, Shakespeare does not ever use the word “cabaret”. But then I remembered that the building which houses OCT was originally Ashland’s First Baptist Church, built in 1911. At one point in its history, it was painted bright pink, and became known locally as “the Old Pink Church.” Now I had my quotation, and I could start!

OCT was established in 1986, having been acquired by Craig Hudson four years earlier and carefully restored to its original structure, including stained glass windows. Its logo is based upon the beautiful crystal chandelier which hangs in the centre of the auditorium, and OCT has a deserved reputation as an elegant dining theatre producing high quality entertainment throughout the year. In particular, it offers performances on Mondays when its near-neighbor, the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, is dark, and thus theatre-goers have the opportunity to see shows every night of the week.

I have been going to OCT for the best part of two decades, and as I’ve been writing this piece, I’ve been reflecting fondly on such shows as *Four Guys Named José* and *The Mystery of Irma Vep*. I remember the work of its original artistic director, Jim Gancarlo, who died unexpectedly in 2014, and I’ve been following the development of the company under its new artistic team of Valerie Rachelle and Rick Robinson, now in their eighth season.

Valerie told me that their prime goal was to keep the wonderful atmosphere and community established by Jim, Craig and others who started the Cabaret. Alongside of that, their biggest changes have been to produce shows that have not been previously staged at OCT, for example musicals with larger casts, and a different style of programming than had been done in the past.

One effect of those larger casts is that OCT now tends to use more local performers than it did in the past. After using only local actors in its first seasons, OCT has subsequently always had a mixture of local actors and artistes brought in from around the country for specific shows. Having that established pool of local talent proved a boon in the early days of the pandemic: OCT was able to be flexible enough to produce theatre productions even in the summer of 2020, albeit to smaller audiences.

Furthermore, OCT was attractive to local actors even before pandemic because it was able to pay them, to offer a significant run of performances (usually nine or ten weeks), and to guarantee sizeable audiences throughout that run. I can tell you that to go out to perform for a tiny audience can be a disheartening

experience! In those pre-pandemic days, OCT was beginning to work with other local companies in holding joint auditions: let us hope that that tradition can return soon.

As Valerie says “The Rogue Valley has so much local talent and we do our best to cast locally as well as out of town talent to serve the needs of that particular production.” Although the rehearsal schedule may be daunting: “We have to rehearse 10am to 6pm Wed-Mondays (Tuesdays dark) and it makes it hard for locals to give up that much time from their day jobs... those locals who are able to clear their schedule for us to do a show—we are very happy to have on board.”

OCT continued to make theatre during the pandemic, even in the most challenging months of the summer of 2020, when it staged a fine production of *The Odd Couple*, but it suffered in the same ways as other businesses in the service and entertainment industry. To quote Val again: “We have all suffered losses and setbacks. We have done so much to make sure our patrons and our staff are safe, and we are under strict protocols provided by Actors’ Equity Association. We will continue to do our best to keep everyone safe while still keeping theatre alive in the Rogue Valley.”

Valerie is full of praise for the ways in which audiences have responded to the impact of Covid, the need to wear masks, provide proof of vaccination etc. “This community has been wonderfully supportive of us during this time. Those that don’t feel comfortable attending have been donating their ticket money or taking a credit for future tickets. We have been selling well and our patrons have been wonderful about helping us keep as safe as we can.”

And what of the future? The prospects for OCT look positive: it has Ken Ludwig’s *Moon Over Buffalo* running until April 10, followed by Lin Manuel Miranda’s *In the Heights*, but, for a more general gaze into the Crystal ball, I leave the final words to Valerie:

“Live performance has survived for hundreds of years through all kinds of obstacles in our human existence. Theatre will survive and this community has been wonderfully supportive of live performance. Theatre may encounter bumps and bruises but storytelling and gathering is needed to feed our souls—and that will never end.”



Geoff Ridden has taught in universities in Africa, Europe and North America. Since moving to Ashland in 2008, he has become a familiar figure on radio, in the theatre, in the lecture hall and on the concert stage. He is artistic director of the Classic Readings Theatre Company and has a particular interest in adaptations of the plays of Shakespeare. Email geoff.ridden@gmail.com

COURTNEY FLATT

The welcoming waters in 2021 appear to be the second most favorable for fish since scientists with NOAA began monitoring ocean conditions.

Good Ocean Conditions Could Be Good News For Salmon, NOAA Says

Fish swimming out to sea over the past year have lucked into some of the best water temperatures and food abundance along the West Coast in the last 24 years, according to an analysis from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration began monitoring ocean conditions

That could be good news for salmon and steelhead over the next few years, biologists said.

The welcoming waters in 2021 appear to be the second most favorable for fish since scientists with NOAA began monitoring ocean conditions, said Brian Burke, research fisheries biologist at NOAA Fisheries.

"It's sort of been this growing picture of, 'Wow, things are really looking good right now across the board,'" Burke said.

The 2021 ocean conditions were bested by what Burke called a phenomenal year in 2008, after which researchers saw an increase in salmon and steelhead runs for several years.

The researchers measure a variety of signs that make up good ocean conditions, including sea surface temperature and the amount of food available to young salmon.

This past year, researchers observed a large upwelling in the winter and spring, which brought cold waters from deep in the ocean to the coastline, creating perfect growing conditions for salmon and steelhead that migrate out to sea, Burke said.

The upwelling brought many deep-sea nutrients to the surface, he said. The extra food helps the salmon grow quickly. As young salmon become larger, they escape the clutches of predators such as seabirds, he said.

"The upwelling created a really productive coastal system," Burke said.

That productivity has built slowly over several years, Burke said, after a string of hard years for ocean-dwelling fish.

A mass of warm water known as the Blob hammered the West Coast marine ecosystem, peaking in 2014 and 2015. The Blob left fewer food sources available to young salmon entering the ocean. The marine heatwave also forced more predators to eat salmon. In addition, it caused the largest algal bloom harmful to crabs and clams recorded on the West Coast.

These marine heatwaves are becoming more common, according to a news release from NOAA about a 2019 expanse of warm water similar to the Blob.

The recent cold upwelling was a welcomed relief from the heatwaves and will likely benefit juvenile salmon and steelhead that traveled to the ocean this year, Burke said.



COURTESY OF THE COLVILLE TRIBES

Young salmon and steelhead heading out to sea have lucked into some of the best ocean conditions in decades, biologists said.

However, nothing is guaranteed. For example, he said, predators could swoop in and take a bite out of the growing salmon. The NOAA ocean condition assessment doesn't account for predators.

On the other hand, the beneficial ocean conditions also help a lot of anchovies, sardines and smelt, Burke said, which could give predators more fish species to snack on.

Right now, Burke said, the researchers individually evaluate each sign that points to how hospitable the ocean is to fish, when in fact, the entire system is linked.

Eventually, he said he would like to design a way to look at the ecosystem in a more connected way, similar to a flow chart. In that sort of approach, he said, researchers could pinpoint where a bottleneck might arise in the web of ocean conditions.

Moreover, Burke said he hopes an ecosystem-wide approach to monitoring ocean conditions could help fisheries beyond salmon management. For example, he said, commercial fishers in Oregon could plan business moves several years in advance.

"Commercial fishers could know about things like squid distribution ahead of time or even estimate squid distribution based on things like marine waves," Burke said.



Courtney Flatt is a Richland-based multi-media correspondent for NWPB and the Northwest News Network focusing on environmental, natural resources and energy issues in the Northwest.

SELENA SIMMONS-DUFFIN
& ALYSON HURT

Only after the CDC director issues an official recommendation can shots get distributed to pediatricians and pharmacies around the country.

When Can Babies And Kids Under Age 5 Get Their Shots? Here's The Timeline

The first big hurdle was crossed when Pfizer shared its clinical trial data with the FDA. Now there are five more steps to get through before this vulnerable population can be vaccinated.

Babies as young as 6 months old could be able to get a COVID-19 vaccine in the U.S. within a few weeks if regulators agree the vaccines are safe and effective for this age group.

On January 25, Pfizer and its partner BioNTech took the first big step that could lead to COVID-19 shots actually becoming available to kids when they submitted their clinical trial data to the Food and Drug Administration for its review. There are several regulatory steps to come, but things could move quickly from here. For context, the process with 5- to 11-year-olds last fall took just over four weeks.

Here's what has to happen before little ones under 5 years old can start getting vaccinated against COVID-19.

It remains to be seen whether parents will be eager to embrace the shots if they're authorized. According to a poll published Tuesday by the Kaiser Family Foundation, more than two-thirds of parents of children in this age group say they'll wait and see about vaccination or are «definitely» not planning to vaccinate their kids. Nearly one-third of parents say they'll vaccinate their babies and young children right away.

Currently, Pfizer is the furthest along in the process toward authorization, but Moderna is also testing its vaccine with this age group – the company plans to submit data to the FDA on 2- to 5-year-olds in March. Johnson & Johnson is expected to conduct vaccine trials for young kids in the future as well.

Here are more details on what each step of the regulatory process entails and how it is going for the Pfizer vaccine.

Step 1: Drugmakers conduct clinical trials and submit data to the FDA

Pfizer and BioNTech have done a three-phase clinical trial in children 6 months through 4 years old. The companies announced in December that efficacy of the two-dose series for children older than age 2 but under 5 was disappointing, and many public health experts and parents assumed this meant many more months of waiting.



CREDIT: JESSE ZHANG FOR NPR

But in an unusual move, the companies decided to pursue applying for authorization as they continue to study the vaccine because of the “urgent public health need,” Pfizer-BioNTech said in a news release.

On Feb. 1, the companies began to submit data on the safety and efficacy of two doses of the vaccine in this age group – describing them as “part of a three-dose primary series” – in an application for emergency use authorization to the Food and Drug Administration. Data on the third dose, given at least eight weeks after the second, is still being collected and analyzed.

The pediatric clinical trial for this vaccine includes a total of approximately 8,300 children from 6 months to 12 years old. In the youngest age groups, the vaccine is given as a series of three shots – the second is 21 days after the first, and the third is eight weeks after that.

Kids’ dosage is smaller than for adults: The dose for littles is 3 micrograms, a much smaller dose than the 30 microgram dose given to adults and teenagers. For children ages 5-11, the dose is 10 micrograms.

Pfizer has yet to publicly release detailed safety and efficacy data for children in this youngest age group.

Step 2: Independent scientists review the data

On Feb 15, a panel of outside scientists will consider Pfizer’s safety and efficacy data along with an analysis from FDA

scientists on the risks and benefits of the vaccine in different pandemic scenarios.

After presentations and discussion, the group of advisers will vote on whether the benefits of the Pfizer vaccine outweigh the risks for use in this age group.

Step 3: FDA officials weigh in

Next, the FDA – the agency itself – will consider the advisers' vote on Pfizer's smallest-dose shot for the youngest kids.

Then FDA officials will decide whether to extend the emergency use authorization for Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine to this youngest age group.

Step 4: More independent scientists debate and vote

But wait, there's more. Yet another federal health agency and its advisers have to weigh in before the shots can become available – this time, it's the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

You can think of it like this: When it comes to vaccines, the FDA is in charge of the *what* and the CDC is in charge of the *who*.

The CDC's vaccine advisory group will meet soon after the FDA has completed its evaluation. After more presentations and more discussion, the group of CDC advisers will vote to recommend the vaccine for all children in the 6 month to 5 year age group, or it could also recommend limiting it to a subset of that age group (for example, children with underlying conditions or those who haven't had a prior coronavirus infection).

Step 5: CDC director makes final recommendation

The vote from the CDC's advisers isn't an official recommendation – that comes from the CDC's director, Dr. Rochelle Walensky.

She needs to greenlight the advisers' recommendation. She can change the recommendation from what the committee voted on – as she did with boosters – but she usually follows its lead.

Only after the CDC director issues an official recommendation can shots get distributed to pediatricians and pharmacies around the country.

Step 6: Doses get distributed to providers and pharmacies

After an initial crunch when vaccines for 5- to 11-year-old kids were first approved, shots soon became widely available. Since many pediatricians' offices have had months of practice administering Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccines to older kids, it's likely that the rollout for little kids and babies will go smoothly.

Experts suggest looking out for guidance from your child's pediatrician and school about where shots will be available

The road to vaccine authorization for kids under 5

Pfizer-Biontech

1	Clinical trial The drug companies compile safety and efficacy data from their clinical trial and ask the FDA to extend the emergency use authorization for the vaccine to this age group.	Application filed (Feb. 1)
2	FDA advisory panel vote The panel votes on whether the benefits of the vaccine outweigh the risks, based on data from the clinical trial and presentations from federal scientists.	Meeting on Feb. 15
3	FDA authorization The agency weighs the advisory panel vote and decides whether to extend emergency use authorization to this age group.	After the FDA advisory panel vote
4	CDC advisory panel vote The panel votes on whether the newly FDA-authorized vaccine should be recommended for all children in this age group or only certain subgroups of children.	After the FDA authorization
5	CDC recommendation CDC Director Rochelle Walensky decides whether to endorse the advisory panel's decision.	After the CDC advisory panel vote
6	Available to the public Pediatric shots start going out to pediatricians' offices and pharmacies.	After the CDC recommendation

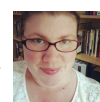
and when. Parents should also be able to find pharmacies with these low-dose pediatric COVID-19 shots in stock at [vaccines.gov](https://www.vaccines.gov), a CDC website that helps people who want COVID-19 vaccines figure out where to go.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: At press time, the panel of scientists had yet to vote on whether the benefits of the Pfizer vaccine outweigh the risks for use in this age group.



Selena Simmons-Duffin reports on health policy for NPR.



Alyson Hurt is a Senior Graphics Editor at NPR.

JOE HERNANDEZ

One of the many consequences of the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020 was a spike in food insecurity across the United States.

A Church Is Suing After A Town Says It Can Give Away Free Meals Only Twice Per Week

An Oregon church has sued the town where it's located over a new local ordinance that restricts the number of times the church can dole out free meals each week to those in need.

St. Timothy's Episcopal Church and the Episcopal Diocese of Oregon say in a federal lawsuit against the city of Brookings that the ordinance limiting them to two free meal giveaways per week violates their constitutional right to free religious expression.

"We've been serving our community here for decades and picking up the slack where the need exists and no one else is stepping in," the Rev. Bernie Lindley said in a statement.

"We have no intention of stopping now and we're prepared to hold fast to our beliefs. We won't abandon the people of Brookings who need our help, even when we're being threatened," he added.

Brookings Mayor Ron Hedenskog and City Manager Janell Howard did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

The pandemic increased the need for services from the church

One of the many consequences of the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020 was a spike in food insecurity across the United States. The nonprofit organization Feeding America estimated that 45 million people, including 15 million children, were food insecure that year.

The same was true of Brookings, a town of about 6,700 residents in the far southwestern corner of Oregon. St. Timothy's had been working with other churches to ensure locals could get free meals every day of the week, but some churches suspended their meal programs when the pandemic began, according to the lawsuit. St. Timothy's, in turn, began offering meals six days a week, serving up to 70 people each lunchtime.

The church also offered coronavirus testing and COVID-19 vaccination. At one point, the city asked St. Timothy's to allow people who needed to sleep in their cars to use its parking lot, and the church agreed, the filing says.

But the services for homeless people began to rankle residents living near St. Timothy's, who complained of trespassing, littering and noise in their neighborhood, Oregon Public Broadcasting reported. The residents sent the city a petition in April asking for the church's homeless services to end.

In October, the City Council approved an ordinance creating a permit for "benevolent meal service" and restricting it to



COURTESY OF EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF OREGON AND ST. TIMOTHY'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Free meals are prepared at St. Timothy's Episcopal Church in Brookings, Ore.

twice per week. The only nonprofits in Brookings offering free meals to homeless people are churches, according to OPB.

Pushback from St. Timothy's leads to legal action

At the time of the vote, Hedenskog, the mayor, said the City Council was trying to take into account the needs of those who go to St. Timothy's for services as well as the concerns of local residents, the news site Wild Rivers Outpost reported.

"There is nobody on this council that has made an attack on St. Timothy's whatsoever. It's not because we're all wicked. It's because we're meeting needs [to serve] a dual purpose. There are other ways to explain what's going on without vilifying the City Council," he said, according to the news site. "I'm upset over this. I've been upset over it for weeks. There has never been a statement from this council or staff about shutting down benevolent kitchens. We're looking to strike an equilibrium."

Continued on page 37

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NPR News Focus: Religion

Continued from page 35

Still, the church said it took legal action against Brookings because it said the ordinance violates congregants' "free expression of their Christian faith, which calls them to serve others in need." The church said it has not applied for a permit as required under the new ordinance.

Bishop Diana Akiyama, of the Episcopal Diocese of Oregon, said she supports the church and its efforts to provide free meals for those who need them.

"The parishioners of St. Timothy's are obeying the teachings of Jesus when they provide food and medical care to their community," she said in a statement. "As Christians, we are called by faith to feed the hungry and welcome the stranger. Providing hospitality to all who enter St. Timothy's in search of help is integral to our beliefs."



Joe Hernandez
is a reporter for NPR.

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Fun, it's in our Nature!

These sites, stories, and resources span the state and reinforce the idea that Chinese heritage is far more woven into the settlement and development of our region than it has ever gotten credit for.

Centering Chinese History in Oregon

The recent thematic volume of the Oregon Historical Quarterly (OHQ) was featured on our February episode of *Underground History*. We invited my co-guest editor Jennifer Fang and journal editor Eliza Canty-Jones to discuss the new publication and the ways in which it is reframing Oregon history. In addition to articles showcasing research done by the Oregon Chinese Diaspora Project (OCDP) that listeners might be familiar with from past *Underground History* episodes, the volume had contributions ranging from an historical comic based on the life of Buckaroo Sam, a biography on the life of influential Portland businessman Louie Chung, articles featuring the historical Chinese communities in Salem and Eugene, two research files dedicated to fascinating stories uncovered in immigration records, and a guide on conducting genealogy research. Taken together, these sites, stories, and resources span the state and reinforce the idea that Chinese heritage is far more woven into the settlement and development of our region than it has ever gotten credit for. In her introductory essay, Jennifer Fang states that, “The works in this special issue compellingly demonstrate that reclaiming the place of Chinese people paves the way for nothing less than a new understanding of Oregon’s history.”

In confronting and correcting the erasure of Chinese people from communities across the state, Chinese Oregonians can begin to reclaim the sense of belonging that the exclusionary laws, violence, otherization, microaggressions, and discrimination over the past century and a half has made difficult to access at times. This has been one of the goals of the OCDP since its inception, and part of the reason why so much of our work has focused on rural areas that had historically high Chinese populations, yet are not home to their descendent communities today. Many of the miners and railroad workers that once resided in places like southwestern Oregon did eventually make their way to the Willamette Valley where their descendants still reside, but the threads connecting these stories have been largely lost over time. This is even more so for the thousands of invisible men and women who participated in the early communities and economies of Oregon and either returned to China or left no descendants.



CREDIT: CHELSEA ROSE

Flattened can found on the Ah Yee Mining Site on the Malheur National Forest that was modified for use in a mining “grizzly”.



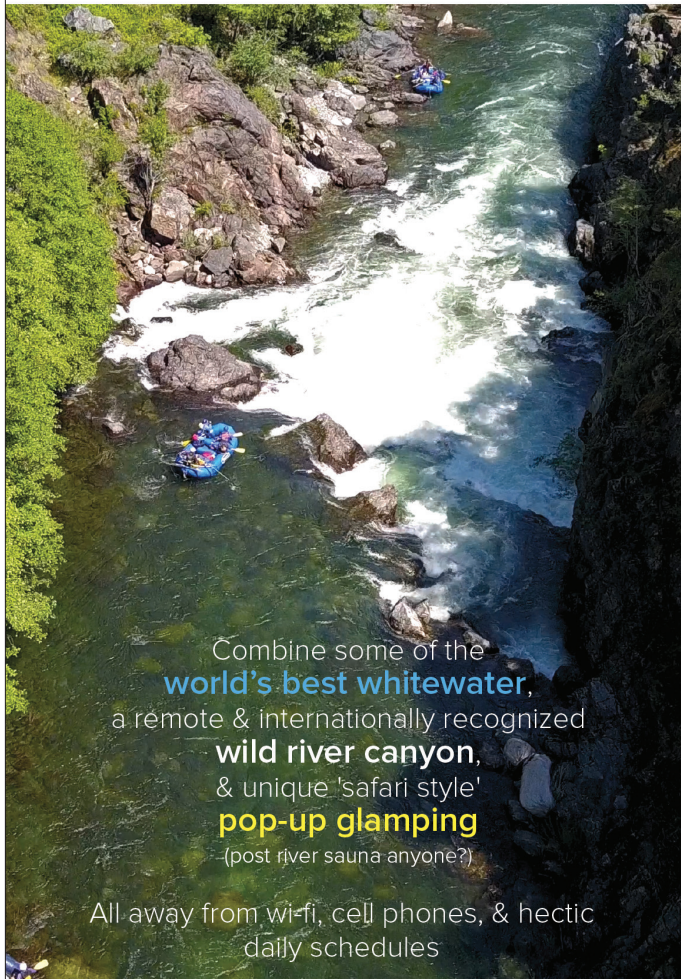
While the documentary record is imperfect and biased, and oral histories are only durable if the stories are shared, remembered, and retold, the material culture remains of past lives can serve as witness to the choices, opportunities, and expertise of individuals that may be otherwise forgotten. A pair of rubber boots uncovered outside of the partially completed Buck Rock Tunnel can speak volumes about a man who was engaged in dangerous work over the winter of 1884. A flattened can modified into a food grater or mining tool can reflect the creativity and problem solving needed to obtain desired items in remote areas. The presence or heavy and breakable ceramic containers—in even the most isolated of sites—reinforces the global networks that the Chinese diaspora established and utilized to make

a living and stay connected both across the state and the Pacific Ocean. Through the type of interdisciplinary collaboration seen in the OHQ volume, archaeologists, historians, descendant communities, and other stakeholders can pool resources and information and make a substantial dent in the deficit in the underrepresented history of places like Oregon.

In addition to humanizing and individuating the monolithic and often overly stereotyped narrative of the Chinese immigrant experience in Oregon, this volume, and the work described in it, is adding to the ongoing efforts of the South-

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Underground History

Continued from page 39



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Rubber boots found at the Buck Rock Tunnel. The boots were made by the Union India Rubber Company of New York.

ern Oregon Chinese Cultural Association (CCBA), the Portland Chinatown Museum, and other cultural and heritage groups working to raise the visibility and explore the complexity of Asian American history and culture in our region. I will close with another quote from Jennifer Fang's introduction to the volume: "In highlighting the significance of early Chinese communities throughout the state, the authors posit that Chinese people have been integral to the making of Oregon." This is not only important to the nearly 200,000 Oregonians of Asian descent, but should be celebrated by everyone who is able to access more accurate and inclusive information about the place we call home.

Stay tuned for information about Oregon Historical Society's public programming coming this summer, including an event featuring the archaeology of the Buck Rock Tunnel at Grizzly Peak Winery on June 15th. In the meantime, you can read Jennifer Fang's introduction on the Oregon Historical Quarterly website in both English and Chinese languages, and you can pick up a hard copy of the volume for \$10 from the Oregon Historical Society's museum store (www.ohs.org). You can find out more about the Southern Oregon Chinese Cultural Association here: <https://www.soccachinesenewyear.org/> And you can check out the Portland Chinatown Museum, their rotating exhibits, and virtual programs here: www.portlandchinatownmuseum.org. Finally, keep your eyes peeled for more from the Oregon Chinese Diaspora Project—we have a busy summer planned.



Chelsea Rose is an archaeologist with the Southern Oregon University Laboratory of Anthropology (SOULA) and co-host of Underground History, a monthly segment that airs during the Jefferson Exchange on JPR's News & Information service.



ERIK NEUMANN

What happens when dedicated public servants decide they didn't sign up for this political fight?

The Challenges Of Public Service In Divisive Political Climate

Last October in Josephine County, Grants Pass School District 7 Superintendent Kirk Kolb announced that, after 20 years with the district, he won't seek an extension of his contract after this summer. Kolb's district made local headlines last July after two teachers, North Middle School Assistant Principal Rachel Damiano and science teacher Katie Medart, were terminated over their "I Resolve" campaign, a series of resolutions meant to limit the rights of transgender students in schools. The teachers were fired for using district time and resources while engaging in political activities.

When the Grants Pass school board made an about-face and reinstated the two educators in November, their rehiring inspired a walkout at the local high school. Students and counter protesters clashed, leading to several student arrests. Damiano and Medart are still in the midst of a federal lawsuit against the district for allegedly violating their rights under the First and Fourteenth Amendments.

Across the border in California, the pitch of local politics is even more shrill. A bitter recall election has divided Shasta County over the past year. In February it resulted in the recall of District 2 board of supervisors member and former Redding police chief, Leonard Moty. Within a week of the Shasta County recall results becoming clear, the local director of the department of Health and Human Services, Donnell Ewert, announced he'll be retiring in early April after a 23-year career with the county.

Like national partisan efforts to censure Republicans Liz Cheney and Adam Kinzinger for participating on the panel investigating the Jan. 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol, extreme partisanship appears to also be dragging down local-level public servants in Southern Oregon and Northern California.

Superintendent Kolb respectfully declined my interview request, but his letter to the Grants Pass school board announcing that he won't seek a contract renewal illustrates his exhaustion with the local climate.

"While we are living in unprecedented times with a pandemic and paralyzing political division, I have tried very hard to not let the socio-political issues that are dividing our county infiltrate the halls and classrooms of our schools," Kolb wrote. "As you can see by headlines throughout the country and our own experiences here in GPSD, this has been nearly an impossible feat."

I did speak to Donnell Ewert of Shasta County HHS. He said over the past year, protesters regularly called for him to be fired over his response to the pandemic. He said his decision to retire was based on several losses of people close to him over the past year. But he also described protesters' anger with state policies, which became redirected at county employees, playing a part in his decision to leave.



CREDIT JPR.ORG

In a YouTube video, North Middle School science teacher Katie Medart (left) and Assistant Principal Rachel Damiano promote a series of measures around student gender identity. Their online campaign is called "I Resolve."

"A lot of the angst was misplaced, so I think that made it a little easier to move ahead with the things we needed to do to try to protect vulnerable people in our community," Ewert said.

What happens when dedicated public servants decide they didn't sign up for this political fight? The great resignation appears to not just be about nurses tired of putting their lives on the line in overburdened hospitals or underpaid workers searching for greater job satisfaction. It's also about longtime, dedicated public servants who are fed up with this level of drama.

How do we lower the pressure and ensure that people who refill these roles do so based on their qualifications rather than their partisan leanings? I don't have a solution except to vote. Local elections, especially those held during non-presidential years, have famously low turnout. For all the drama surrounding the Shasta County recall, a mere 40% of residents in District 2 voted out Supervisor Moty, which in effect shifted the whole county to the right. That's about 5,000 people, according to the elections office, out of a county-wide population of 180,000. Other officials like Ewert are appointed, rather than elected, in his case by the new board of supervisors and the county's CEO. The Grants Pass School District is in the process of looking for a new superintendent. Kolb's term ends this summer and his replacement will be announced at the end of March.

"No one is irreplaceable," Shasta County's Ewert told me. And of course he's right. But it's hard to imagine the tone of politics not limiting the pool of people willing to take on the already tough jobs of supporting public schools and weary public health departments, with an added dose of abuse.



JPR's Erik Neumann is JPR's interim news director. He earned a master's degree from the UC Berkeley Graduate School of Journalism and joined JPR as a reporter in 2019 after working at NPR member station KUER in Salt Lake City. Erik grew up alongside the Puget Sound and is passionate about the power of narrative storytelling to explore the issues that impact people's lives.



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The Great Resignation's Unquiet Desperation

Henry David Thoreau noted in 1854, “The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation.” It’s 168 years later, and that desperation is no longer so quiet. The Great Resignation is real. I worry less about job vacancies than about the workers who plan to quit tonight. I can’t help wondering whether I will have been their last customer.

In most cases, I encourage such change. If they think they can do better, they should quit. I recall the advice I heard from one of our best local curmudgeons. Paul Nicholson insisted on a refund or some remedy. The worker was not allowed to give him what he wanted. Finally, the exasperated worker said to Paul, “I’ve done everything I’m allowed to do. What more would you like from me?”

Paul’s response was profound: “I want you to quit your job. Get hired where they give you more authority or provide assistance when you need it. Life’s too short to work for bad people.” Nicholson didn’t say that last part out loud, but I’m sure he was thinking it. I’ve wondered a thousand times what that fellow’s dinner hour was like that night.

Stores limit their hours to fit the workers they hire. Lines are longer at our favorite burger joints. Every phone call now begins with a recorded warning of excessive wait times because of “higher than anticipated call volume.”

More vacancies than job-seekers is not uncommon, but usually there’s a significant dislocation between the two. Applicants lack training for the jobs available. Or they live in the wrong part of the country. This time around, anyone seeking a job can have one.

That’s taking some getting used to. Afghan refugees are encouraged to look for a job as soon as they are allowed to work. Now we also have to teach them how to choose between jobs they’ve been offered.

I have a good friend who has helped large corporations build and maintain their social consciousness programs. She’s ready for a job change, but are employers ready to bid up for her services? Prize real estate accepts sealed bids before a transaction is finalized.

Workers are just beginning to articulate what they want from their employers.

Workers may soon have the same leverage. Who’s interviewing whom?

The Great Resignation accelerated during the pandemic, but Obamacare reset the board. The Affordable Care Act freed workers from “job lock.” Anyone with pre-existing conditions didn’t dare to quit their job. Losing health insurance was too big a risk. Those days are gone now, even if employers and employees are just now realizing it.

Workers are just beginning to articulate what they want from their employers. It’s too soon to call these demands, but that’s where we’re headed. They want flexible hours and work-from-home options. They want their work to feel meaningful, which is far more legitimate than insisting that they be constantly praised for their efforts.

They want work that gives them meaning and connection without consuming every waking hour. After all, they are waiting longer for their fast food or the next available customer service agent, just like the rest of us.



Don Kahle (fridays@dksez.com) writes a column each Friday for *The Register-Guard* and archives past columns at www.dksez.com. Kahle owned the *Comic News* for ten years, so a progeny named after a cartoon character isn’t much of a surprise.



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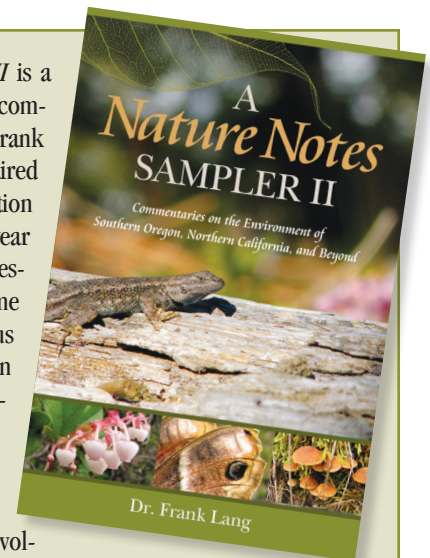
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Tahini Toffee Pudding

My feet were sore and my heart was heavy after a long day of walking. I had left Jerusalem again and was going to make London my home for the foreseeable future. After a day spent sorting out living arrangements, I stumbled into a pub I had read about once in a novel. I ordered fish and chips and I splurged on a dessert the waiter told me was not to be missed. It was my first experience with sticky toffee pudding. It wrapped me in such warm comfort that night and remained my favorite dessert until I left London with a family in tow, five years later, to make Philadelphia my new home. At first, I felt a sense of betrayal at tinkering with this dessert that had been so good to me, but this version with tahini is so sublime that the transgression can only be forgiven.

Reprinted with permission from *The Arabesque Table: Contemporary Recipes from the Arab World*, by Reem Kassis (Phaidon, April 2021).

MAKES 9–12 SERVINGS

For The Cake

Butter and flour, for the pan
9 oz (250 g) pitted medjool dates
1 cup (8 fl oz/250 ml) boiling water
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
4½ tablespoons (2 1/2 oz/70 g) unsalted butter
¾ cup (5 1/3 oz/150 g) granulated sugar
2 Eggs
5 tablespoons tahini
1½ cups (7 oz/200 g) all-purpose (plain) flour
2 teaspoons baking soda (bicarbonate of soda)
1 teaspoon baking powder

For The Toffee Sauce

¾ cup (6 fl oz/175 ml) heavy (double) cream
6 tablespoons (3 oz/85 g) unsalted butter
Scant 1/2 cup (3 oz/85 g) light brown sugar
3 tablespoons date molasses
1 tablespoon tahini
Pinch of salt
Vanilla ice cream or greek yogurt, for serving

Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F (180°C/Gas Mark 4). Butter and flour a 9-inch (23 cm) round or 9 x 13-inch (23 x 33 cm) rectangular cake pan.
2. In a food processor, combine the dates, boiling water, and vanilla and blend into a smooth purée. Transfer to a bowl and set aside.
3. In the same food processor bowl, combine the butter and granulated sugar and cream until pale and well combined. It won't fluff up as it would in a mixer, but that's fine. Add the eggs and tahini and process until you have a pale smooth purée.
4. Tip the flour, baking soda (bicarb), and baking powder into the food processor and process until combined. Fold the date mixture back in and process just until combined, taking care not to overbeat the batter.
5. Scrape the batter into the prepared cake pan and transfer to the oven. Bake until a skewer inserted into the center comes out clean, about 45 minutes. You can start testing at 35 minutes.
6. Meanwhile, make the toffee sauce: In a small saucepan, combine the cream, butter, brown sugar, and date molasses and cook over low heat until the butter melts. Increase the heat to medium and bring the mixture to a boil. Simmer for 2–3 minutes, stirring occasionally, until slightly thickened. Remove from the heat, add the tahini and salt, and give one final stir. The tahini toffee sauce should be warm when served and can be reheated on the stovetop if necessary.
7. To serve, place an individual slice on a serving plate, top with ice cream or yogurt, and drizzle with the warm sauce.

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LISA NELSON

Rebuilding Society Starts Here

Pre-dawn pastel unknown color of sky
These are great times for those on a spiritual path
The way the hand-dripped coffee grounds form a puffy
liquid pillow
that collapses in on itself.
The alertness of the female deer, probably pregnant,
extending her neck forward with each step
as she walks past the window.

Sky now differentiating, the one into two,
thin pink clouds on the pale blue,
pointing to infinity.
I have time, I have problems, I have coffee, I have beauty
Every blessed morning.
This is the time, and I seem to be a person.

If Kids Were Odometers

Daddy liked root beer floats
So sometimes we would suddenly
be getting a treat at the A&W drive-in

The glass mugs were frosted
and the edges of the soft ice cream
would freeze and we would be glad
we had been issued both an orange straw
and a long orange spoon.

Singing in the car on the way, or on the way home,
Our family used the same note
To start "Home on the Range" as we did
To start "Oklahoma."

If kids were odometers
to record all the places they had been driven,
Mine would have turned over a *lot*.
When I have trouble sleeping, I pretend
I'm stretched out on the back seat,
feeling the rumble.

Lisa Nelson lives in Ashland, Oregon. She has had two poems published in the We'Moon 2021 Datebook and has self-published a novel, *Growing the River Tao*, and two poetry chapbooks, *An Offering of Confetti* and *With a Third Glance*. She is a retired Professor Emeritus of the Political Science Department at CSU Pomona.

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